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I HAD A GREAT AIM; IT WAS TO STUDY AND PREPARE MYSELF, THEN TO ESTABLISH A SCHOOL WHERE POOR GIRLS COULD STUDY AND SUPPORT THEMSELVES BY WORKING

MRS. KOBASHI'S STORY

TOLD IN HER OWN WORDS TO THE MISSIONARY WHO INSTRUCTED AND BAPTIZED HER

FOR some time I have been wishing to write to you to ask you to join me in my thanksgivings to our God for the wonderful way in which He has led me, and for the great help which you so kindly gave to me in the beginning of my Christian life.

It was April of ten years ago that I came from my mountain home and entered Mrs. Urabe's school to learn how to arrange flowers, serve ceremonial tea and make fancy work.

I had already graduated from the Higher Primary School, and at home had been taught not only housework and sewing, as my elder sister had been, but, because I always wished to do whatever I saw anyone else do, my mother had taught me to spin and weave, and I knew all about my father's farm work and could help him about any part of it. I had a great aim. It was to study and prepare myself, then to establish a school where poor girls could study and support themselves by working while studying. Mrs. Urabe's course of study, which I accomplished in three months, did not help me much in my preparation for my life work; but it was there that I first heard of my Saviour. Mrs. Urabe asked me, almost immediately after I entered the school, if I would not become a Christian. She said you were coming at the end of a week's time, and you would baptize me, she thought. The idea of the Heavenly Creator was not new to me; for my grandfather always taught us all that even one grain of rice should never be wasted, for it was something no man could ever make, but was produced by the combined power of the heavenly god and the earth god. And my grandfather was so good and wise a man that the people from all the country around us came to him with their troubles for his advice and with their disputes for his judgment and adjustment. But Christianity seemed to be composed of something more—a prayer, a creed, and ten commandments—which I must learn by heart and understand. To

accomplish this I gave the entire energies of mind and soul during that week, and persecuted poor Mrs. Urabe with questions and arguments until, finally, the night before you arrived, I had no more doubts and had made up my mind irrevocably to be a Christian. I had not succeeded yet in learning all by heart, and all I understood was simply that in the Cross of Christ and in His Resurrection I could be saved. You said when you examined me that if I believed that much I could be baptized, and learn the rest afterwards. I promised you that I would, and you baptized me, giving me the name of Ruth. My Japanese name was Kalsuno Yamamoto.

One year later, in November, I received Confirmation from Bishop McKim. Up to that time I had not known that there were any other foreigners in Japan except you and your wife. I had heard that your wife lived in Osaka, and had seen her sweet face in a photograph. Three months after my Baptism I had returned to my mountain home; but Mrs. Urabe always sent a postal card to tell me when you came, once a month, and I could generally manage to attend the meeting at Myoji, which is only about thirty *cho* from my father's house. I would defer any shopping which I had to do for these occasions; and, as the meetings were generally in the evenings, and I must return alone over the mountain road, I would take a maid-servant with me, and took a great deal of pains to buy some trinket for each of them, to make them more willing to accompany me and wait until the meeting was over before returning. The meetings were a great joy to me; and, as I did not know that you had any other work, I used to feel quite impatient because you did not come oftener. It was not by any means enough for me to have one service and sermon a month. When there was a Christian teacher at the preaching place in Myoji and when Mrs. Urabe let me know that he would be at Myoji, I would sometimes plan out the work for all the maids, in reeling silk from the cocoons, or in whatever work was in season, and putting on a pair of straw sandals would secretly run down to Myoji through the ravine instead of by the road, so that I would by no chance meet any one, to think in his heart and perhaps say to other people, "Very improper the way that Yamamoto lets his daughter gad." But I could thus reach the preaching-place unobserved, and go in and have a little hurried talk about the Way and a little helpful prayer, and then a hurried climb back through the ravine in and out of the brook before I was missed. I did not think it was necessary or well to tell my parents I was a Christian, because they would not understand.

Then when you went home to America I felt so discouraged and sad. I thought I should never hear a foreigner preach again, and was somewhat comforted and relieved from my forebodings when another missionary appeared to take your place. And so three years passed by, during which my parents sometimes wished me to marry, as there were what they considered good offers, but I always stubbornly refused, and asked my father to give me my dowry with which to go to a higher school and prepare myself for carrying out what I was led to believe was my life work.

During those three years of waiting I learned to pray with an intensity which I cannot express to you. After the busy day's work was done, I would go out into the quiet garden, and with clasped hands and bowed head beseech our Lord to open the way for me to accomplish my purpose. I never had the least doubt that He heard me, and would surely give me what I prayed for; but I could not understand why He kept me waiting so long. And those days, when the other young people about the farm would sing their working songs, I would sing the only hymns I knew, "Whiter than snow" and "Come to this place of prayer, and bless" (*Kami no Megumi*). I was so unskilful in singing that the rest would laugh at and mock me; but I

thought my unskilfulness made them notice the hymns more, and hoped the beautiful words would sink into their memories and hearts. At last my father said, "This girl will make something unusual if she takes the right way in her stubbornness," and he yielded to my entreaties so far as to allow me to go to school. I came to Osaka alone to select the school, and chose the Poole *Jo Gakko* (Girls' School) because I heard that the principal was such an earnest, consecrated Christian. There, under her guidance, I spent four happy years. What did it matter to me if I had to go into classes with the little girls at first? My prayers were answered, and my heart was full of praise. I told my teacher my aim. She sympathized with me and gave me work to do which would help to prepare me for the life I had chosen. I had the care of some of the smaller girls among the boarding pupils; I had normal training in Sunday-school teaching, and went with the other girls and some of the teachers, to carry on mission Sunday-schools, here and there, in Osaka; and, as I already had learned all about ordinary sewing, I always voluntarily helped the sewing teachers of the school, for they were so busy that often the pupils would be kept waiting their turn to receive the teacher's instructions.

My teacher wisely and kindly helped me to tone down my mountain boisterousness and my impatience. Her influence over me spiritually was very great, and I learned to pray with still greater faith and earnestness. Especially during my last year at school, and as I neared my graduation, I formed the habit of awaking at a certain time in the silent night, and praying intensely for guidance. I now realized what a difficult work I seemed called to do. I could not see any way to accomplish my purpose. Prayer was my only resource. Then came the gracious answer, by which I have the privilege of mothering the 150 children of the Widely Loving Society! Do give thanks to our God for the way He led me and answered my petitions. My parents let me have my own way about spending the money for my dowry; so, as I did not need fine clothes for my life work, I was able to provide a new suit for every child then in the *Hakuai Sha*, and the other pupils of the Poole Girls' School took great pleasure in helping me to make them.

Now I am working very gladly with the help of our Lord.

I can't be lazy, as I used sometimes to be, for there is so much to take care of and educate so many children and provide the means. And I can't forget to pray, for I know I can do nothing, nothing, except by our Lord's help. So He enables me to awake, every night, as during that last year at school, and for a little time, in the stillness and darkness, to pray with all my soul and strength for His guidance.

Please pray that I may always follow God's leading.

We gladly print this story of Mrs. Kobashi's life as a living example of the united work done through the American and English Churches in the *Nippon Sei Kokwai*. This young Japanese girl, first led to the knowledge of Christ by an American missionary, and trained in an English school, now a daughter of the *Nippon Sei Kokwai*, is the mother of the Widely Loving Society, of which Miss Hayashi, who visited us in 1906, is the heart.

The story of one such woman makes us find the words of the English missionary easy to believe:

"I certainly would not exchange for anything this world could offer my life, with its ever-increasing opportunities of individually pleading with souls and telling over and over again to those who know it not the story of God's love."

THE CHURCH OF THE WIDELY LOVING SOCIETY, BUILT IN 1907

"When you pray for the Japan Mission, pray especially for the raising up of native workers, both men and women. The native workers can reach their own people in many places where the foreign workers can do nothing."

Copies of this Leaflet may be had from the Corresponding Secretary, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York, by calling for Leaflet No. 319